

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

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## **FAILURE TO SECURE IRAQI NUCLEAR SITES COULD FUEL NUCLEAR TERRORISM**

*Looting of nuclear materials has occurred, says Defense Department team*

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Taskforce on Nonproliferation, a Senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today released a letter questioning President Bush's failure to prevent looting of known Iraqi nuclear sites.

"I believe it was grossly negligent to not immediately secure known Iraqi nuclear sites as soon as possible," Rep. Markey stated. "As a result, we have lost both control of and information about the status of Iraq's nuclear weapons program, one of the major motivations for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Moreover, some reports have indicated that nuclear materials may have already been stolen from these sites."

The *Washington Post* reported on May 4 that the Baghdad Nuclear Research Facility, a long known Iraqi nuclear site, was not secured until very recently and was heavily looted prior to the arrival of U.S. forces. This report also indicated that a total of seven known nuclear sites have been inspected to date and all have been heavily looted. These reports were verified on May 7 when CNN reported that looted uranium-containing barrels were being used by local villagers to store water.

During his March 17, 2003 address to the nation, President Bush said, "The danger is clear: using ... nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other." The International Atomic Energy Agency documented seven Iraqi nuclear sites and concluded at least a partial inventory of these sites. These inventories indicated that tons of partially enriched uranium, nearly ready for weapons use, was present at the sites. This information was passed on to the United States on April 11, but the sites were not inspected until May 3—nearly a month after U.S. forces helped topple a statue of Saddam on April 9. By that time the sites had been heavily looted.

Rep. Markey's letter asked the following questions of the President:

- Why was there a one-month delay in securing these sites, especially since they were already known to contain at least some nuclear materials and/or nuclear related documentation?
- What steps are being taken to secure these sites now to prevent additional looting, to identify what was taken, and to prevent any looting at other such dangerous sites?
- What steps are being taken to facilitate the return of recover these dangerous materials and to protect the health of Iraqi civilians?
- What steps are being taken to prevent the smuggling of these materials out of Iraq?

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